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## ECUADOR NEWS

### Ring in the New Year with a ‘Retro American Music’ dinner show starring the ‘Sinatra King’

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**By Liam Higgins**

A Cuenca New Year’s Eve with Frank Sinatra? Well, maybe not exactly with the ghost of Old Blue Eyes but it may be the next best thing.

Robert Sanders performing at the Malibu (California) Inn

Recently arrived Cuenca expat Robert Sanders, who spent much of his life performing Sinatra’s standards in his “Sinatra King” stage show in the U.S., is presenting what he calls a “Retro American Music Show” at Hotel Los Balcones in the historic district. The show, which also features pianist David Zoernig, includes dinner (see details below).

Sanders has been writing and performing his own work since the 1970s. A Brooklyn native, Sanders began his singing career in the Greenwich Village folk music scene, working the coffee houses and bars with other young singers, including Bob Dylan, Jackson Browne and Roger Penney. After joining the Screen Actors Guild, he also played bit roles and did “background work” in a number of movies, most notably Woody Allen’s *Annie Hall*.

In the 1980s he toured with his own band, Rob Sanders and Windows, before embarking on a solo career focusing on Sinatra. In between, Sanders said he often took any job he could get – “I liked to eat,” he says – including working for the Wally Findlay Fine Art Galleries on West 57<sup>th</sup> in New York City.

Sanders settled briefly in Amarillo, Texas, where he tried his hand at country and western music, writing and recording “Lone Star of Amarillo.”

In more recent years, Sanders lived in California where he continued to perform his “Sinatra King” routine and picked up occasional acting roles, including one in the 2012 *Muppets* movie.

Through the years, Sanders has stayed in touch with many of the musicians, actors, writers and directors he worked with in New York and California, and many have offered testimonials to Sanders’ performing career, among them Shirley MacLaine, David Bowie, Ed Harris, Jamie Lee Curtis, Robert Morningstar and Mick Jagger.

In addition to performing works made famous by other artists, Sanders writes and sings his own compositions. He is particularly proud of a recent recording, “I See Myself in You,” which he wrote as a kind of multi-generation anthem. Among the friends who have agreed to participate in an upcoming video of the song is Sophia Stewart, author of the *Matrix* and *Terminator* movie series, who wrote that the lyrics remind her of Michael Jackson’s “We are the World.”

Beyond the New Year’s Eve gig at Los Balcones, Sanders is exploring the possibility of other musical productions in Cuenca, including a childrens’ concert at a local museum and a musical stage show in the Casa de la Cultura theater. His biggest dream, he says, is to produce a large-scale masquerade ball. “I’d call it the Great Cuenca Masquarade Ball and it would require a very large facility, lots of music and lots of talent. Given Ecuador’s rich tradition in costume- and mask-making, this has the potential to be a truly fabulous event.”

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***Robert Sanders is hosting a Retro American Music New Years Eve Dinner and Concert December 31 at Los Balcones, Presidente Borrero 12-08 at Gaspar Sangurima (the old California Kitchen location). There will be two musical sets, one in which Sanders accompanies himself on guitar, the second with Sanders accompanied by pianist David Zoernig. Cost of the dinner is \$25 per person, \$7.99 for children. Dinner***

*begins at 7. For reservations, call Hotel Los Balcones at 284 2103 or email [info@HotelLosBalconesCuenca.com](mailto:info@HotelLosBalconesCuenca.com)*